

**Michigan Freedom Trail Commission Meeting Minutes**  
Conference Call – Commission Room, Michigan History Center  
August 26, 2016

**Commissioners present for Conference Call:** Ron Brown, Earlie Eason, Roy Finkenbine, Juanita Moore, Edwina Murphy (in person), Robin Peebles, David Teeter, James Turner

**Excused:** Tamara Barnes, Rochelle Danquah, Michael Nassaney,

**Absent:** None

**Staff present:** Sandra Clark, Mary Patrick

**Guests:** None

Vice-chair Finkenbine called the meeting to order at 11:05 AM.

**Introductions:** Finkenbine welcomed Ms. Earlie Eason to her first meeting since being appointed, and everyone introduced themselves.

**Agenda:** Teeter moved to approve the agenda; Brown seconded the motion, and the agenda was approved unanimously.

**Public Comment:** None.

**Minutes:** Teeter moved to approve the February 18, 2016, meeting minutes as presented; Brown seconded the motion, and the minutes were unanimously approved. Finkenbine moved to approve the June 3, 2016, meeting minutes as presented; Peebles seconded the motion, and the minutes were unanimously approved.

**Action Items:**

a. Network to Freedom (NTF) Applications

Clark said that Michigan History Center staff are researching Watkins Farm. No other updates were given.

b. Update on NPS List Verifications

At the June 3, 2016, meeting, commissioners agreed to verify the accuracy of listings currently appearing on the NTF website. Those updates were provided. Finkenbine will contact Caroline Carter at Wayne County Community College about the Fort Street site. Patrick will notify NPS so they can update their list.

c. Future Meeting Locations

The November 4 meeting date will need to be changed. Patrick will use Doodle Poll to reschedule the meeting. Finkenbine noted the value of holding FTC meetings in various parts of the state, and asked about commissioner interest in hosting the November meeting. Jim Turner joined the conference call at 11:20. Teeter will look into Wayne County Community College and First Baptist Church as potential meeting sites, and will work with Patrick to make meeting arrangements once a date is set.

## Reports

- a. Staff: None
- b. Chairperson: None
- c. Vice Chair: Finkenbine provided a written report (attached).
- d. Commissioner Reports: None
- e. Standing Committee Updates:

All agreed that adding members to the committees and moving forward as quickly as possible is a priority.

- Site Identification, Facilities and Programs: Turner moved that the Chairperson make a formal request to former FTC member Carol Mull to join the committee. Teeter seconded the motion, and it was unanimously supported.
- Cultural and Heritage Tourism: Peebles reported that she met with Travel Michigan (TM) staff to discuss story ideas and staff interest in joining subcommittees for help with research and stories. One option is to utilize the magazine's Michigan Moments section which features shorter articles, making it possible to fit in something UGRR-related sooner. She and Teeter will work to develop action items. TM staff are reviewing articles for 2017 with the publisher, and are beginning to plan for 2018.
- Preservation and Support: Turner reported on a booklet about the African-American tradesmen in 1930s-1950s New Orleans, and how they helped the trades industry and labor movement to grow. This is a culturally iconic element when looking at labor history that he had not previously heard in similar trades discussions with African-Americans in Michigan. Clark said that Center staff have been doing related research and may be able to provide leads to follow. Turner has had experience teaching restoration preservation at workshops. He believes teaching cultural reclamation (trades of a period) could benefit Michigan historic sites and parks by utilizing those historic properties as training venues for teaching the trades to young people. Doing this would be a win-win on several levels: sites can receive badly needed maintenance, revenue is generated by charging people for the classes, and it gets people to visit more than yearly.
- Education Committee: Finkenbine noted that FTC member Tamara Barnes spoke with Ruth Andrews of Cass County about serving on the Education Committee. Ms. Andrews expressed interest, but is concerned about non-reimbursed travel expenses. Finkenbine said that the committee's work can be done by phone, making travel unnecessary. Barnes will confirm Ms. Andrews' interest and bring her name forward to the FTC for approval.

Finkenbine asked for input on two documents distributed: "Ideas for Educators" document by Finkenbine, and Ron Brown's list of educational sites and materials. Brown suggested streamlining the two documents for ease of access, and verify all links before going on-line. A simple starting point should be organized that would include summary background reading for teachers and lesson plans with documents pulled from Karolyn Smardz Frost's book.

Finkenbine suggested items be designed to reach middle school, high school, and higher education, noting that the bibliography previously done is most relevant to college students. Clark added that they will need to look at Michigan standards to

determine level, and look at American history to integrate Michigan examples into upper grades. She will ask staff to identify UGRR things that can be used. Finkenbine and Brown will work together to complete this project.

Finkenbine asked Eason to let Patrick know on which committee she is interested in serving.

**New Business:** None

**News and Announcements:**

Finkenbine is working with Carol Mull on research surrounding an original 1822 document for the Michigan Historical Review. Judge Isaac Lee, a Justice of the Peace who owned a house near a bridge in Amherstburg, reportedly collected money from those crossing the bridge while also hiding slaves. There is a marker at the site, but it does not mention the UGRR connection. Murphy offered to check with the law library at the University of Michigan for help with locating legal documents.

Turner moved to adjourn the meeting; Moore seconded the motion, and the conference call meeting was unanimously adjourned at 12:05 PM.

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Sandra S. Clark, Executive Secretary